

Then the Bush Administration's Office of Management and Budget came and said, we agree with your idea to have a coordinating council, and we are here to support it. That initiative has worked very well, as I anticipate this coordinating council will work very well.

Again, I compliment the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. FOWLER) on her initiative for being so stick-to-itive on this matter and bringing it to a very successful conclusion.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mrs. FOWLER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I want to just thank the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. OBERSTAR), the ranking member. I think the work that we have done on this legislation is an example of how this legislative process is supposed to work.

When we see a problem and we work together to develop what is going to be the best solution for that problem, and it evolves over time, that is what has happened with this legislation, that it has been a work in progress for several months now. I think the project that we have produced today is an excellent product.

It is not half a loaf as the gentleman said, it is the whole loaf, because the point of this all along was to establish an entity within the Executive Office of the President; and that is what we are doing, establishing this council within the executive office that will be able to coordinate and oversee and eliminate the duplication that occurs right now in these programs throughout our Federal Government. So it really has been an example of how we should work on every piece of legislation in this body together.

I also just wanted to point out, Mr. Speaker, that this legislation has been endorsed by the National League of Cities, the National Emergency Management Association, and the International Association of Fire Chiefs. These three groups have worked very closely with us, and we have taken their input as we have crafted this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I include for the RECORD the following letters:

JULY 25, 2000.

Hon. TILLIE K. FOWLER,
U.S. House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE FOWLER: We are writing on behalf of our members to express support for H.R. 4210, the "Preparedness Against Terrorism Act of 2000." This legislation will help address our concerns about a coordinated system of federal resources to communities throughout this country.

Local fire, police, and emergency medical services personnel are the first responders to the scene of a terrorist threat or attack. It is crucial that the federal government develop and implement a comprehensive national domestic preparedness plan as provided for in H.R. 4210.

Our organizations urge the swift adoption of this bill in the House of Representatives.

Sincerely,

NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES.

NATIONAL EMERGENCY
MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION,
July 25, 2000.

Hon. TILLIE K. FOWLER,
U.S. House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

The National Emergency Management Association (NEMA) represents the state directors of emergency management who are responsible for protecting lives and property from natural disasters and man-made events such as domestic terrorism. State emergency management serves as the central coordination point for all state agency resources during an incident and provides interface with federal agencies when assistance is needed.

NEMA supports the concepts embodied in H.R. 4210 that strive to improve federal coordination efforts for domestic preparedness including the development of a national strategy. We support provisions in the bill that require budget and program reviews for federal agencies involved with domestic preparedness and that they are aligned with the goals and objectives identified in the national strategy. NEMA would like to see the greatest possible authority provided to the President's Council to affect real change in how federal agencies coordinate with each other and with states on this critical issue. State and local emergency management and responder input to the Council is extremely important as they are the ones who will respond to and manage the event for the first several hours. H.R. 4210 includes a provision that establishes a State and local advisory group.

NEMA commends you for your efforts to improve our nation's domestic preparedness program and we look forward to continuing to work with you to ensure H.R. 4210 meets its intended goal of enhancing preparedness and response capabilities among all levels of government.

Sincerely,

JOSEPH F. MYERS,
NEMA President.

Mr. Speaker, as stated earlier, this is an excellent bill. This is an important bill, because what we are doing here is ensuring that each and every community in our country will be better prepared when, and if, a terrorist act does occur.

American lives are at stake here, and we cannot waste any more time. We need to work together to make sure that those emergency responders that are the first ones on call when an instance occurs that they have the training, they have the resources, they have the equipment that they need to respond. Again, I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. WATTS of Oklahoma. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 4210, the Preparedness Against Terrorism Act. Domestic terrorism has affected my life profoundly. I said to myself after the death of 169 innocent men, women, and children in the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing that I would lend my support and endeavor indefatigably to do everything possible to ensure that when terrorism touches America again, we will be as prepared as possible to deal with the consequences. However, today, the truth is the American government is just not able to properly deal with a massive biological/chemical/nuclear terrorist attack.

In 1998, the Attorney General created the National Domestic Preparedness Office (NDPO) within the FBI to coordinate federal terrorism preparedness programs. Prior to this switch, the Department of Defense was the

lead body. The NDPO's mission is to coordinate the more than forty federal departments and agencies with programs to assist state and local emergency responders—firefighters, police, and ER workers—with planning, training, equipment, and exercise drills necessary to respond to a conventional or non-conventional weapon of mass destruction (WMD) terrorist incident. Unfortunately, the NDPO has not been able to perform as proposed due to funding shortfalls and a lack of authority necessary to execute its duties. I think that it is inexcusable that the Clinton/Gore administration has decided to set their priorities elsewhere without dealing with the defense of this nation and its citizens first, but don't take my word for it.

A recent congressionally mandated study preformed by the "Advisory Panel to Assess Domestic Response Capabilities for Terrorism Involving WMD" chaired by Governor James Gilmore and researched by RAND came to the same conclusion. Their report stated "that the complex nature of current Federal organizations and programs makes it very difficult for state and local authorities to obtain Federal information, assistance, funding, and support." In addition, the Panel concluded "the concept behind" the NDPO is sound, but it just was not doing what it was meant to do. Surely, the current administration has not done enough. I congratulate Ms. Fowler for her intrepid work on this and her steps to get the vital issue of improving our homeland defense addressed.

As the days in this Congress wind down, I promise to make my voice heard and leadership known in ensuring that Americans are as protected as possible against biological/chemical/nuclear terrorist attacks in the next Congress. I am going to fight to maintain and increase America's prevention and consequence management abilities. The federal government spends billions of dollars on fighting terrorism, but the American people need to know that their funds are not wasted and go to the most relevant programs to ensure their security.

Mrs. FOWLER. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PEASE). The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. FOWLER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4210, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. FOWLER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 4210, as amended.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Florida?

There was no objection.

CARL ELLIOTT FEDERAL
BUILDING

Mr. LATOURETTE. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the